

Duck figures down: claim

By MICHAEL LOWE

DUCK shooting should stop because of low bird numbers, animal welfare activists said at the start of the season yesterday.

Coalition Against Duck Shooting spokesman Laurie Levy said he was one of 70 protesters at Moulting Lagoon on the East Coast for the start of the duck shooting season.

Mr Levy said he saw just a handful of ducks, compared with tens of thousands during the 1980s and early 1990s.

He said global warming was drying up wetlands so duck breeding was way down.

Mr Levy said Primary Industries Minister David Llewellyn should join other states and ban shooting to allow duck numbers to recover.

But a spokesman for Mr Llewellyn

said there was no evidence of an overall decrease in Tasmanian duck numbers during the past 20 years.

So the season would continue until June 9 (June 1 on King Island), although Mr Llewellyn would take advice as the season progressed.

The spokesman said the game management liaison committee had advised the season go ahead but if warranted, Mr Llewellyn would consider closing the season early.

Mr Levy said there were more protesters than shooters yesterday and protesters would return to the lagoon today.

"With global warming, native birds are in serious trouble," Mr Levy said.

"They need assistance to survive, they certainly do not need hunters making their lives more difficult."

Police said there were no incidents.